

LAY MEMBERS AND PROFESSIONAL CLERGY:
TOWARD A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF
PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR PARISH CLERGY

A Professional Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Theology
Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Randall Wayne Daniel Skoretz

May 1996

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This professional project completed by

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has been presented to and accepted by the
faculty of Claremont School of Theology in
partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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May 1996

Abstract

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A survey of the literature concerning professional ethics and professional ethics for clergy reveals that a standardized code of ethics could not be the solution to the this problem. Chapter 2 gives a brief history of professionalism and clergy. Chapter 3 explores the dynamic nature of the role of parish clergy and the diversity that defies standardization. Chapter 4 deals with lay members' involvement in the development of a code of ethics for their clergy professionals while Chapter 5 proposes a model for their involvement.

The thesis is that lay members and clergy ought to work together toward reaching a shared understanding of professional ethics for professional parish clergy.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Professional ethics are the commonly understood rules of relationship between professionals and non-professionals in a specific field. They are important because trust is such an important part of those relationships. A professional provides what the non-professional needs or wants and often cannot provide for him or herself, and therefore a relationship of trust is born out of necessity. The professional and the non-professional rely on each other.

The growing dependence of individuals in our society on professionals to supply their needs has intensified the need for a common understanding concerning the agreed on rules of relationship. Professionals feel the need for professional ethics to protect their professionalism and their work. Non-professionals feel the need to understand what they can expect from the professional and how they can be protected from unscrupulous professionals.

The Problem Addressed

Ironically, although the Judeo/Christian tradition emphasizes ethics, only recently has a strong interest developed in creating standards of professional ethics for clergy in parish ministry. Many administrators and clergy struggle with the issue of professional ethics for clergy in parish ministry on a regular basis. Most religious organizations have committees that discuss, form and enforce

professional ethics within their specific communities but lay parishioners usually become aware of it only in crisis situations when professional behavior and or expectations are at issue. That is too late.

The problem is that although both lay and clergy along with administrators need to address this issue, usually lay members are not informed or involved. They should not be left out. There is no place for most lay members within specific religious communities to learn about the specific issues that effect their relationship with their clergy.

An example of this problem is that most members who approach their clergy for counseling are not aware of whether their clergy are specifically trained for the type of counseling that they need. Some clergy have extensive training while others are not trained at all. An understanding of what a lay member should expect out of a counseling session with their clergy in terms of expertise, style and boundaries should be clear to every member before the need to seek counseling ever arises. Good decisions concerning these issues are much easier to make when the pressure of difficult situations is not present. A clear understanding of such issues could avert problems between lay members and their clergy.

There needs to be dialogue between a broad spectrum of lay members and their clergy concerning the development of a common understanding of professional ethics for parish clergy

in all issues of ministry. By common understanding I mean formal and informal agreements on the structure of the relationship between lay members and their clergy. Although many such agreements exist in the form of codes of ethics or standards of behavior, they need to be practical. In other words, they need to be in a form that provides lay members easy access to them so they can be utilized. They also need to address the realities of the relationship. Thirdly, they ought to reflect the shared values and traditions of the religious community.

The issue of lay members' awareness and involvement in developing standards of professional ethics for parish clergy is important because of its impact on religious communities. The mission of religious communities is rarely one of developing standards of professional ethics for its clergy, yet the ability of that community to accomplish its mission can rise or fall depending on the relationship of its professional leadership to its lay members. That relationship is governed by a set of principles which can be articulated as professional ethics. Professional ethics, then, provide the bones of the body of relationship between professional clergy and lay members.

The relationship between lay members and parish clergy is often a close relationship involving trust and vulnerability. Lay awareness of professional ethics can facilitate trust by defining clergy credibility. Lay

awareness also protects the vulnerability of both clergy and lay members by creating a common understanding of boundaries within the lay/clergy relationship. These boundaries describe what is seen as unacceptable behavior within the lay/clergy relationship as uniquely defined by specific religious communities. Differing expectations concerning the definition of clergy credibility and the boundaries of lay/clergy relationships cause conflict, loss of trust, and increased vulnerability between parish clergy and lay members. Therefore a shared understanding concerning professional ethics is an important facilitator of the lay/clergy relationship.

Karen Lebacqz talks about a related issue, the power of professionalism. She points out that the ability of professionals to define themselves and their expertise gives them power in their relationships to lay members.¹ Yet lay expectations are a definite influence in defining any profession and those expectations have a power of their own. Only when lay expectations and professional self definition are developed in relation to one another can common understanding exist. When that happens, the faith experience of the religious community is enhanced by the strength of the relationship between those professionally involved in ministry and those who minister in a lay capacity.

¹ Karen Lebacqz, Professional Ethics: Power and Paradox (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 109-23.

The process of developing a shared understanding between lay members and parish clergy should be a process of ethical and theological reflection. The faith that drives the mission of the religious community ought to be the basis of that theological reflection. Biblical authority and theological traditions along with contemporary issues provide the focus for discussion. This process has the potential for developing the faith experience of the community.

Clergy need to be persuaded that their lay members ought to be aware of the issue of professional ethics for parish clergy and that the ministry of their religious community will be enhanced if lay members participate in the development of a shared understanding of professional ethics for parish clergy.

Thesis and Project Summary

The thesis is that lay members and clergy ought to work together toward reaching a shared understanding of professional ethics for professional parish clergy. Lay members need to be an integral part of the ethical reflection that develops this understanding and this reflection is an important aspect of the religious education of the church.

This chapter introduces the problem, defines major terms, gives a brief summary of work previously done in the field, and outlines the scope and limitations of the project.

A brief history of the role of the clergy profession, recent expectations of parish clergy, and an illustration of

the changing role of parish clergy are included in the second chapter to this project. They are important because they show that the idea of professions is a recent idea tied to the rise of university education. They also demonstrate the existence of the professional clergy. Some might argue that we should not have a professional clergy. While this project does not address that issue, it does recognize that professional clergy do exist and therefore addresses the issue of how it might be determined what kind of professionals they should be. The description of recent expectations of parish clergy illustrates the current frustration that exists when the issue of professional ethics for parish clergy is not out in the open. The dynamic nature of the role of parish clergy sets the stage for arguing the necessity of local discussion concerning professional ethics.

The third chapter contrasts the various aspects of religious pluralism in America. Although the trend in professionalism has been toward the development of national organizations who develop codes of ethics they then implement in their specific field through education, accreditation and marketing, this strategy would be totally ineffective in the world of parish clergy. The reason for this is the religious diversity, cultural diversity and the new wave of non-christian plurality. This also conclusively moves the discussion from where it now exclusively resides, in administrative committees and seminary classrooms, to the

religious communities that benefit or are harmed by the professional conduct, good or bad, of their clergy. This chapter also deals with the conflicting expectations within the pluralistic American religious milieu and how that mitigates against the development of uniform codes of ethics. It concludes with a discussion of parish clergy and the recent involvement of the courts in clergy ethics.

The fourth chapter deals with the lay members' involvement in ethical reflection concerning this topic. Lay members play several roles in the religious community. They are at various times consumers, volunteer laborers, and perhaps most importantly believers. They have a right to expect certain things from their clergy in terms of service, leadership, and faith. Without lay members, professional clergy lose meaning in their ministry. They are therefore critical to the process. This chapter illustrates the different roles the major players play in the reflective process.

The fifth chapter proposes that the solution is in providing places and methods for dialogue concerning professional ethics for parish clergy within specific religious communities. It includes a discussion of topics for ethical consideration concerning professional ethics for parish clergy, an exploration of places and methods for that discussion to take place, and a model for the implementation of these educational experiences within the life of the

religious community

Definitions of Major Terms

The distinction between lay members and parish clergy is an issue that could take far more space to delve into than is available here. The use of the term lay members in this project will not assume any particular theological understanding of laos or laity but rather simply use the term lay to represent those who do not belong to the particular profession of parish clergy. The term parish clergy refers to those who are paid professional leaders within a specific and local religious community. This distinguishes them from lay ministers who function on a volunteer level and lay members within the religious community. This project focuses on clergy who minister within the context of a parish excluding other clergy professionals, such as hospital chaplains, religious counselors, and church administrators who function in separate professional fields.

The use of the term lay/clergy relationship refers to the relationship that exists between those who are involved together within religious communities, some as paid professional parish clergy and others as lay members. A shared understanding within the lay/clergy relationship implies that not only do lay members and parish clergy share a common understanding concerning professional ethics for parish clergy, but that both lay members and parish clergy are involved in the development of the common understanding.

It also means that a broad spectrum of lay members as well as parish clergy are aware of the common understanding.

Educating lay members refers to the process of increasing awareness among lay members as well as the process of developing shared understanding between lay members and parish clergy concerning professional ethics for parish clergy. Education is shared growth in understanding between individuals within a community.

Professional ethics are the commonly understood rules of relationship between professionals and non-professionals in a specific field. Applied to parish clergy this can refer either to specific levels of expertise expected by consent to the term professional or to the boundaries that protect the nature of the lay/clergy relationship. Many professions have developed a uniform code of ethics which is a written code of ethics commonly accepted for that specific profession.

The definition of the term power within the context of the lay/clergy relationship is adapted from Karen Lebacqz's definition of power, the power of professionals "to define reality."² That power is not theirs alone. Lay members and society also define reality. Lay members, clergy, and society share that power as they interact with and influence the definition of the professional relationship.

² Ibid, 123.

Work Previously Done in the Field

There are three basic categories of work previously done concerning professional ethics for parish clergy: Those which have developed guidelines for professional ethics for parish clergy or have developed a process for parish clergy to make ethical decisions, those which explore specific ethical decisions that challenge parish clergy, and those which have explored the social ramifications of clergy as professional.

In Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care and The Moral Context of Pastoral Care, Don Browning seeks to establish a process for making ethical decisions in the context of professional pastoral care.³ This provides an interesting contrast to authors like Alastair Campbell and Gaylord Noyce who work toward developing actual codes of professional conduct.⁴ Joe Trull and James Carter work towards helping the professional develop her or his own personal code of ethics.⁵ Although there is no unifying organization that

³ Don S. Browning, The Moral Context of Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976); and Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

⁴ see Alastair V. Campbell, Professionalism and Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); and Gaylord Noyce, Pastoral Ethics: Professional Responsibilities of the Clergy (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988).

⁵ Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, Ministerial Ethics: Being a Good Minister in a Not-So-Good World (Nashville: Broadman, 1993).

provides a single uniform code of ethics for parish clergy⁶ several organizations have tried to develop their own code of ethics as illustrated by the documents collated for the Fall 1973 meeting of Steering Committee of an Interfaith Coalition for Ministry.⁷

Margaret Battin and Jane Boyajian take more of a case study approach listing specific issues in parish ministry and extrapolating professional and ethical concerns brought out in each issue.⁸ Battin selects several issues and deals with each separately while Boyajian is an editor of various article dealing with different ethical issues.

Karen Lebacqz explores the relationship between professionalism, power, and ethics for parish clergy in Professional Ethics: Power and Paradox. Her study is critical to an understanding of how professional ethics for parish clergy is a part of current social understanding of professionalism and power. In another work, she and co-author Ronald Barton have written concerning the role of

⁶ Lebacqz, Professional Ethics, 143.

⁷ Documentation Packet on Codes of Ethics and Due Process: Stemming Out of the Fall 1973 Meeting of Steering Committee of an Interfaith Coalition for Ministry (Boston: Enablement, Inc., 1974).

⁸ Margaret P. Battin, Ethics in the Sanctuary: Examining the Practices of Organized Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); and Jane A. Boyajian, ed., Ethical Issues in the Practice of Ministry (Minneapolis: United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, 1984).

sexuality within the context of the parish.⁹ Clergy Ethics in a Changing Society: Mapping the Terrain is a collaborative effort drawing essays from pastors, historians, theologians, applied theologians, and ethicists exploring clergy ethics in current social context.¹⁰ This is a pivotal work as it highlights the relationship between social influence and clergy ethics.

Scope and Limitations of the Project

These works on professional ethics for parish clergy have a strong focus on the role of parish clergy in the development and implementation of their professional ethics, yet there is a lack of focus on the role of lay members. It is true that lay members often have a significant role to play in that their representatives often sit on committees that deal with professional ethics for parish clergy. Unfortunately, raising the general awareness of this issue among lay members and the process of educating lay members concerning professional ethics for parish clergy are ignored.

The main thrust of this project will be to deal with the issue of raising lay awareness concerning professional ethics for parish clergy and the involvement of lay members in the

⁹ Karen Lebacqz and Ronald G. Barton, Sex in the Parish (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991).

¹⁰ James P. Wind et al., eds., Clergy Ethics in a Changing Society: Mapping the Terrain (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991).

process of developing a shared concept of professional ethics for parish clergy.

This will limit the focus of study to professional ethics, meaning those ethics which govern the relationship between lay members and professional clergy. Although it will be important to trace the historic origins of professionalism to understand current attitudes toward parish clergy, this study will not attempt to solve the question of whether or not we should have professional clergy, but rather accepts the premise that they exist in today's society.

This study will also be limited to parish clergy or clergy who function within local congregations and will not include other clergy professions, such as hospital chaplains, university chaplains, military chaplains, church administrators and evangelists.

This project is intended to be useful to all religious communities that include professional clergy in their ecclesiology. Although each religious community has a unique perspective determined by their history, traditions and experience, they share many characteristics and needs. Nevertheless, the author understands that there will be some limitations due to his perspective as a Christian and a Seventh-day Adventist pastor.

The issue of educating lay members concerning professional ethics for parish clergy brings together the disciplines of ethics and christian education. The field of

ethics because there should be reflection on what professional parish clergy ought to do and ought to be, and christian education because the need to raise the awareness and participation of lay members concerning this issue. Professional ethics for parish clergy should be part of the education of each religious community. The challenge is to take the process of developing an understanding of professional ethics for parish clergy and make it part of the basic educational process within religious communities.

CHAPTER 2

Perspectives on the Role of Clergy

The role of professional clergy in the community of faith is central to an understanding of professional ethics. Because professional ethics guide the structure of the relationship between the professional and those he or she serves, an understanding of the history and traditions of that relationship are key to defining that relationship. The first part of this chapter will give a brief history describing the rise of professionalism and how the profession of clergy came into being.

Understanding the complicated nature of the lay member/clergy relationship is also important. It shows the need for dialogue concerning the structure of the relationship, in other word the understanding of professional ethics. The second part of this chapter will describe recent expectations of parish clergy and the way in which the unexpressed frustrations can hinder the mission of the community.

The third part of this chapter will deal with the recent shifts in models of ministry. The dynamic nature of ministry within communities of faith shows the need for continuing interaction between lay members and their clergy. The recent shifts in attitudes toward the clergy professional points to the need for constant contextualization.

The fourth part of this chapter will address the public

nature of the role of parish clergy. The recent increase in intensity of interest in the public role of clergy, more than any other factor, adds urgency to the importance of raising the awareness in religious communities concerning professional ethics for parish clergy. Therefor the central role of parish clergy and the intensification of the public profile of clergy will be explored.

The historical development of the clergy as a distinct profession, the recent expectations of parish clergy, the changing role of clergy, and the public profile of clergy set the stage for a new paradigm of involvement for lay members in the process of ethical reflection concerning professional ethics for parish clergy.

A Brief History of Clergy as Professional

Previous to the Middle Ages, there were no distinct professions such as we have today. Any professional services that were needed were provided by guilds. As the influence of the Christian church grew, and because the church provided the context for education, professions developed within the context of the church. There were no separate categories of lawyer, physician, or clergy. Yet most of these professional needs were provided by clerics. The development of each of these into separate professions came with the development of the educational system of universities separate and distinct

from the church. This was not complete until around 1600.¹

The idea of clergy as a distinct profession developed not within a study of authoritative tradition or church concerns, but rather in response to and in concert with the rise of secularism in the enlightenment and the formation of secular education. The pursuit of knowledge in the enlightenment led to the creation of universities,² and provided the impetus to create professionals who would specialize in different areas of knowledge. This rise of professionalism began the process of producing a professional clergy who specialized in the study of theology and the practice of ministry. It became a distinct discipline.³

Although some find it difficult to consider the work of parish clergy as a profession⁴ it still remains a distinct paid position requiring specialized study and training in almost all religious traditions.

A benefit of the enlightenment was the rapid growth of

¹ Walter E. Wiest and Elwyn A. Smith, Ethics in Ministry: A Guide for the Professional (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 87.

² Edward Farley, The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 4-5.

³ Edward Farley, Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 34-39.

⁴ Trull, 34-35.

technology spurred on the explosive growth of science. Donald Hatcher describes the evolution of a "world of technology" in the last several hundred years.⁵ From agrarian to industrialized to a service economy, the only constant since the enlightenment has been rapid change.

Technology, the way we do things,⁶ has changed as well. This change has altered the way in which our society values what professionals do and the way in which they do it. In the agrarian society sustenance was the primary concern. The industrialized society concentrated on the production of products that filled needs. Now in a service oriented society the primary area of emphasis is servicing needs through science, technology, and labor. This has caused the emphasis in training parish clergy to shift from learning to doing. The basic question that many lay members now ask is not what their parish clergy know, but how do they meet my needs. A recent survey of United Methodist laity found that the skills most valued were those directly related to contact between parish clergy and laity such as preaching, management/administration, and pastoral care.⁷

⁵ Donald Hatcher, Science Ethics, and Technological Assessment (Boston: American, 1987), 122-30.

⁶ Ibid, 121.

⁷ "United Methodists Survey Themselves," Christian Century, 1 Sep. 1993, 813.

More recently, as professionalism has developed sub-specialties within various professions, so has the clergy profession developed sub-specialties. Many parishes large enough to have more than one paid clergy professional designate areas of specialty for each clergy member. The parish professional may be the youth worker, Christian education pastor, pastoral counselor, music ministries director, or senior pastor.

Farley describes how theological training has adapted to this specialization and sub-specialization of parish clergy.

Emerging here is what recent decades have called the minister as professional. The educational paradigm which this requires is new, distinguishable from both the divinity and specialized sciences approaches. This new paradigm is not simply an affirmation that the ministry bears the sociological marks of a profession. On the basis of that affirmation, it recommends an education whose rationale lies in its power to prepare the student for designated tasks or activities which occur (or should occur) in the parish or in some specialized ministry. To the degree that this is the case, the theological student neither studies divinity nor obtains scholarly expertise in theological sciences, but trains for professional activities.⁸

The result of this emphasis is that we now look at professional ethics for parish clergy as a description of the technology used by parish clergy as trained professionals. This brings up the question of standards of training and ability. Does the clergy professional perform her or his function as expected? Society today wants to know what

⁸ Farley, Theologia, 11.

parish clergy will do, how they will do it, and how the doing of it will effect them.

The twin concern of professional ethics is the standard of behavior expected from parish clergy. The prevalent issue with the greatest profile is clergy sexual misconduct.⁹ But underlying the surface issues is a general understanding that professional ethics also includes the personal and professional conduct of parish clergy and the boundaries of relationship that exist between them and lay members.

Recent highly publicized clergy scandals where these boundaries have been crossed drive public opinion concerning all clergy professionals.¹⁰ Society today wants to know if the clergy professional is the type of person they can trust.

Recent Expectations of Parish Clergy

Many parish clergy are frustrated by underlying, unexpressed, and unwritten expectations of professional conduct. From serious to trite, these expectations are real and seriously effect the lay/clergy relationship. The expectations are often conflicting as illustrated by this recent tongue-in-cheek post on a religious forum computer bulletin board:

⁹ Lebacqz and Barton, 18.

¹⁰ "Poll Finds Clergy Image Dips to New Low," Christian Century, 9 Dec. 1992, 1128.

The Pastor's Chain letter

Dear Church Members:

The perfect pastor preaches exactly ten minutes, condemns sin, but never hurts anyone's feelings

. . . .

The perfect pastor makes \$100/week, wears good clothes, lives in a respectable home, drives a good car, and donates \$50/week to the church. The pastor's age is 29 and he or she has 40 years' experience.

. . . . The perfect pastor makes 15 house calls a day and is always in the office The perfect pastor has a church where no one ever grumbles or complains because having a perfect pastor enables the church to have perfect members.

If your pastor does not measure up to these standards, send this information to six other churches that are also dissatisfied with their pastor, then bundle up your pastor and send him or her to the church at the top of this list. In one week you will receive 1,643 pastors. At least one of them should be perfect¹¹

A serious survey of the typical congregation's composite expectations would, in most cases, seem as strange as the pastor's chain letter. Many church members regard homiletics as the pastor's primary preoccupation, yet most deem other tasks to be more important. Some see the sacral duties as most important. Others believe that visitation is the most important, while still others judge leadership and organizational skills to be paramount. When the perceived actions of the clergy do not match the expectations of the lay member in terms of skill or priority, the mission of the

¹¹ Vickie Danielsen, ed., "Pastor's Chain Letter," (N.p., 1994), COMPUSERVE SDA On-line+, message #29252.

church can be compromised. This is due to the fact that although the professional clergy may be paid, they are paid to lead a volunteer organization. The only real power they have in leading this organization is influence and their influence is compromised when they are perceived as not fulfilling their obligations. Parish clergy are frustrated by the ambiguous or conflicting dissatisfaction expressed concerning their role in religious communities.

Professional obligations for parish clergy have been seriously expressed in codes of ethics for ministers. Early discussions of standards found its focus on professional etiquette, but more recently they have concentrated on preventing unethical behavior such as sexual abuse.¹²

Religious communities need to find a way to express their expectations for parish clergy in realistic ways to provide accountability and competency.¹³ This expression can be formal or informal but the awareness of these expectations should have a broad scope within the religious community. Parish clergy need to educate the communities in which they work concerning realistic professional expectations, their role as paid clergy professionals, and the proper boundaries of the lay/clergy relationship. The result should be a common negotiated understanding of professional ethics for

¹² Trull, 191.

¹³ Ibid, 194-96.

parish clergy.

The Changing Role of Parish Clergy

The last century has seen fundamental shifts in attitudes toward parish clergy professionals in terms of how they are viewed, how they are trained and what is expected of them. These shifting images of ministry, models of ministry and expectations of what it means to be a professional minister in a parish setting provide a less than ideal mosaic of changing values to which the clergy professional must respond. Sorting and prioritizing these ever changing issues is the process by which the clergy professional seeks out their professional identity and their role within their specific religious community.

The image of clergy has fallen on hard times. In 1928 Nolan B. Harmon began his classic guide to ministers, Ministerial Ethics and Etiquette, this way: "By common consent, the Christian ministry is esteemed the noblest of the professions."¹⁴ In 1993 Joe Trull and James Carter in their introduction to Ministerial Ethics: Being a Good Minister in a Not-So-Good World address the same issue this way: "Ministerial ethics can no longer be assumed, if they ever were."¹⁵ This contrast illustrates the revision of

¹⁴ Nolan B. Harmon, Ministerial Ethics and Etiquette (Nashville: Abingdon, 1928), 17.

¹⁵ Trull and Carter, 9.

thought concerning the profession of clergy. While in the past the professional conduct of clergy was assumed to be above reproach, it has recently come into question.

A second area of change for clergy has developed in models of ministry. Bruce Shelley identifies an evolution of models of ministry through the past century. He classifies these as the pastor-theologian model, the professional model and the enterprising healer model. The clergyperson at the turn of the century was viewed as the pastor-theologian, well educated in her or his field and a leader in thought and dogma. The marriage of professionalism and doctrine was the driving force in the curriculum and training of clergy. After the Civil War the model of ministry became that of professional as the churches became the center of the community and the pastor the focus of that center. Field education and theological clinics carried the day as pastors scrambled to become practical. In the last four decades the image of enterprising healer has become prominent. As growth has become a priority in our success driven society, needs based ministry has taken center stage and market driven churches flourish. As society searches for healing, clergy become another in the long list of healing professions.¹⁶

The third area of change is expectations. With the change in models of ministry has come change in expectations

¹⁶ Bruce L. Shelley, "The Seminaries Identity Crisis," Christianity Today, 17 May 1993, 42-44.

concerning the role of parish clergy. Each tradition, each generation, each organization and each training institution have differing expectations for the role of the parish clergy professional.

Not only are expectations dynamic, but there is a sense in which clergy battle with competing expectations. There are the expectations of the lay members they serve, the expectations of the administrative structure they serve within and the expectations of the society that surrounds them. These expectations often conflict and even compete for time and energy. In a crumpled heap underneath these expectations are the personal expectations each professional brings to her or his responsibilities. Stuart Briscoe asks the important question this way, "In the ministerial box score, which stats really matter?"¹⁷ The question of how to measure success in ministry lies at the root of expectations. The idea of the professional assumes an expertise and special knowledge in the field that plays itself out in the tasks of the professional.

Clergy face the task of sorting these expectations and prioritizing them. The way in which they accomplish this task will determine the way they practice their profession and the way their ministry is perceived.

The central point here is that the dynamic and

¹⁷ Stuart Briscoe, "Regarding Results," Leadership 14 (Summer 1993): 128.

fragmented views concerning the nature of the role of parish clergy complicates and challenges the task of reflecting on issues of professional ethics. There are two specific consequences to this reality.

First, it means that ethical reflection must be an continuing process, sensitive to the changing needs of the role, the clergy, and the lay member. The development of a standard uniform code which would then be applied through time and to different ministry settings is without question inadequate to the needs of the parish. As religious communities change and grow, these changes will impact the relationship between the professional clergy and lay members. An understanding of these changes and developments ought to impact the way we reflect on professional ethics for parish clergy.

The second consequence is that this reflection is best done in the specific environment impacted by the resulting views. An adequate understanding of the specific nature of the relationship between the parish clergy and lay members is best found within the context of that relationship. Therefore it is critical to understand the diversity that persists within various religious communities in terms of when they existed and where they function. An understanding of that diversity is a persuasive evidence of the need to contextualize this issue. The process of reflection must be done in the parish.

The Public Role of Parish Clergy

A crucial component of parish ministry is the public image of parish clergy. There are two aspects to this component. The first is that of clergy playing the central role in the growth of religious communities. Secondly, clergy are faced with public scrutiny as never before. Most truly live their lives as if in a fishbowl.

Clergy have a central role in the life and public image of the religious communities they serve. Professional clergy face increasing visibility as public figures. This visibility finds focus as clergy take on an increasingly central role in the success and health of a religious community. In the past lay members loyalties concentrated on denominational principles and belief systems. They attended neighborhood churches that functioned as the center of their community. Church members now make their decisions based on how churches meet their "felt needs."¹⁸ The clergy professional in the parish is the service provider and thus is central to parishioner's perceptions of their community of faith.

This reality escalates the role that public perception has in ministry. Their public role has become more than facade, it has become fundamental to the heart of ministry. Now more than ever, people attend church because of the

¹⁸ Shelley, 44.

parish clergy professional and their perception of her or him. As the parish clergyperson has become the healing professional, they have assumed the mantel of responsibility for the health of the congregation.

There has recently been an intensification of the public profile of all professions.

This is a time of scrutiny for all the institutions of American society. It is also a time of widespread disaffection, alienation, and resentment at virtually all established organizations which are perceived, often rightly, as having failed to address effectively the challenges of the present.¹⁹

The importance of this aspect of ministry has been intensified by the obsession society has with the personal lives of public figures. From the president to professional football players, the media pries into the intimate details of high profile persons. Clergy are often the quarry. Although in the past personal failures often remained private sorrows, recently they have become media events.

It used to be that the knowledge of the sins of the clergy was confined to their community. Now we read about them in the banner headlines of newspapers, the National Enquirer, and, perhaps, most sickeningly, in trash magazines like Penthouse.²⁰

Society's insatiable hunger for institutionalized gossip has reached into the private world of clergy ethics. Whether

¹⁹ William M. Sullivan, Work and Integrity: The Crisis and Promise of Professionalism in America (New York: Harper Business, 1995), 16.

²⁰ Charles B. Bugg, "Professional Ethics among Ministers," Review and Expositor 86 (1989): 561.

a televangelist or bishops, these media events impact all clergy.²¹ Society has tightened the tether between professional performance and personal lives of public figures and expects to know about the personal lives of their public figures, including parish clergy.

Not only does society expect to know about the personal lives of public figures, but it has expectations concerning that behavior. Although these expectations are as diverse and conflicted as society they are strictly enforced through the discipline of public opinion, and more recently the law. Into this diversity comes the call for regulation and accountability.²² If the religious communities do not address the issue of professional ethics for parish clergy, society will address it for them.

²¹ See Tim Stafford, "Absence of Truth," Christianity Today, 14 Sept. 1992, 18; and "Catholic Bishops Sued Under RICO Act" Christian Century, 14 July 1993, 707.

²² Dennis M. Campbell, Doctors, Lawyers, Ministers: Christian Ethics in Professional Practice (Nashville, Abingdon, 1982), 38-40.

CHAPTER 3

Religious Pluralism and Uniform Expectations

Religious pluralism confounds the process of developing consistent and uniform expectations concerning the role of parish clergy in their unique religious communities. As Martin Marty says,

How does one speak about the ministry in America where ministers run the gamut all the way from Judaism, where rabbis are not technically clergy, through Catholic cardinals; from high church Episcopalianism, where theological and ecclesiastical sanctions are supposed to dominate, to storefront churches where inventive enterprisers set up shop and set out to draw a crowd? From cathedral to tent, from New England village to Crystal Cathedral, we have a spectrum so vast and so complex that one hesitates to generalize as we may and must, but it is possible to see some contours and landmarks from which to measure emergent clergy ethics contexts.¹

The diversity of religious experience between religious communities with different structures, methods of governing and social history creates numerous role variations for parish clergy. These variations make it impossible to create a single code of ethics similar to those that provide regulation for other professions. Interestingly, even in 1926, handbooks containing codes of ethics for professions as diverse as cement mixers and undertakers contained no code of

¹ Martin E. Marty, "Clergy Ethics in America: The Ministers on Their Own," in Clergy Ethics in a Changing Society, eds. James P. Wind et al. (Louisville: Westminster, 1991), 25, 26.

ethics for clergy.²

Religious Diversity

An example of the differences that exist between religious communities are the variations in the attitude of young adults toward religious professions. It demonstrates that the differences are deeply rooted and not superficial in nature. Recent studies exploring the attitudes of entering seminarians and high school and college students toward religious professions have found that although within their own denomination there are distinct images of what the ideal priest, minister, or rabbi should be, there are significant differences between the Catholic, Jewish and Protestant expectations for the parish clergy professional.³ In the case of entering seminarians these differences in their image of the ideal clergy professional played itself out not only in their words but in their behavior as well.

Among Protestants surveyed there was a definite "anti-professional" front, downplaying the differences between the clergy professional and lay members in terms of role distance, training, and the importance of becoming an authority in one's chosen field. A byproduct of this "anti-

² Edgar L. Heermance, Codes of Ethics: A Handbook (Burlington: Free Press, 1924), v-viii.

³ Joseph P. O'Neill and Jerilee Grandy, "The Image of Ministry: Attitudes of Young Adults Toward Organized Religion and Religious Professions," Ministry Research Notes, Summer 1994, 3.

professional" front is an anti-authority "front." This is problematic in that "clergy, no matter what the theology of the denomination, hold a socially 'sacral' position in which it is impossible to escape the exercise of authority."⁴

Parish clergy preach, teach, council and lead. All of these activities require the exercise of authority and carry an expectation of competency, yet the role distinctions have become so blurred that in some cases the need for professional clergy is questioned.⁵

Another result of the "anti-professional" front is the perception among those surveyed that ministers are not as widely admired, influential and respected as they used to be. This perception is confirmed in polls that indicate "public confidence in the clergy has reached an all-time low."⁶

The expectation among Protestants surveyed was that ministers would exercise authority not just on the basis of their professional office, but also because of their personal qualities.⁷ There is a deep fear within protestant thinking that somehow professional technique within the context of professionalism and hypocrisy are connected at the hip and

⁴ Ibid, 5.

⁵ Ibid, 5.

⁶ "Poll Finds Clergy," 1128.

⁷ O'Neill and Grandy, 5.

that authenticity requires a certain rough hewn quality devoid of polished professional knowledge and action. Therefore they emphasize character over method. Wiest and Smith illustrate this attitude this way:

No learning, no discipline, no skilled professionalism of itself gives life to the practice of the ministry. Indeed, there is something wryly anomalous about ordained sinners seeking to become accomplished prophets, teachers, and priests. The figure of the Pharisee warns us: the person who knows how to pray expertly is the Pharisee. Only if there is something of the hopelessly unprofessional publican within can one hope for authenticity in the clergy life.⁸

The implication is that pure professionalism cannot be trusted and that it is hypocritical to assume authority on the basis of professional training and knowledge.

This stands in contrast to the traditional position and role of rabbi with Jewish communities of faith. The role was not that of pastor meeting the needs of a congregation, but rather that of learned lay scholar.⁹ While there is not a sacral separation between lay and clergy within the traditional roles, there is a definite expectation concerning professional knowledge and education. The professionalism of the rabbi came not from their role, but from their education and training.

While Orthodox Judaism still holds to the traditional role for their clergy, in the last century the Conservative

⁸ Wiest and Smith, 81.

⁹ O'Neill and Grandy, 7.

and Reform traditions have changed. The role of the rabbi in these traditions has evolved to more pastoral form of professionalism.

[I]n the Reform and Conservative movements, the rabbi's traditional role as a solver of difficult cases has been diminished, and his knowledge of the law is less crucial to his authority than this ability to play a leadership role in the community life and worship.

The more pastoral a rabbi's role becomes, the more he or she is expected to have personal qualities and skills that go beyond sheer intellectual ability.¹⁰

This movement away from clergy leadership based on knowledge and unique training toward looking for leadership skills mirrors the shift in models of ministry described by Shelly.¹¹ The exception to this similarity is the lack of the anti-professional front, although some predict that this will also change.¹²

The Roman Catholic position is very different from the Jewish and Protestant traditions. Authority is key to the role of clergy and the defining issue for the priesthood. This authority is exercised through the sacral role of the priest. Quentin Quesnell answers the question of whether or not priests have special powers.

Granting public responsibility to fulfill publicly recognized needs implies as well the powers necessary to

¹⁰ Ibid. 7.

¹¹ Shelly, 42-44.

¹² O'Neill and Grandy, 8.

fulfill the responsibility

Those given the responsibility to listen to the penitents' confessions of sins and to speak words of forgiveness in the name of the Church, as Christ directed, must have the power to speak those words in the Church's name and with the full conviction that they are effective¹³

Rather than an anti-professional front we find a absolute professionalism with clearly defined differences between lay and clergy, with authority the defining difference. This understanding is reflected in the attitudes of those entering the priesthood.

If Protestant seminarians show some signs of flight from authority, Catholic men interested in the priesthood seem attracted to authority roles.¹⁴

The problem for the Roman Catholic church in America is that not near enough of them are sufficiently attracted to become priests. There as been a huge drop in the number of Catholic men making decisions to enter the priesthood.¹⁵

As with the Protestant and Jewish communities, there has been somewhat of a softening of the image of the priest as a man apart resulting in two images of the priest. First that of the institutional priesthood who speaks for the church, bears the authority of the church and then that of the

¹³ Quentin Quesnell, "What is a Priest?" in To Be a Priest, eds. Robert E. Terwilliger and Urban T. Holmes, III (New York: Seabury, 1975), 36.

¹⁴ O'Neill and Grandy, 9.

¹⁵ Ibid., 10.

communal priest who although seen as a leader is not set apart from the community he serves.¹⁶

Cultural Diversity

Another area of diversity happens within religious communities broad enough to encompass various geographically defined social milieus and ethnically defined social milieus. These differences often result in separate congregations which although allied with larger religious communities experience a cultural uniqueness that transforms the way in which they perceive the clergy professional.

Peter J. Paris identifies a unique tradition called the "black Christian tradition."¹⁷ He sees it as distinct from euro-American Christian traditions and unified among the separate denominations.

Another example of cultural diversity is immigrant churches. Language differences and cultural differences set these churches apart from the mainstream within their larger religious communities. For instance, in the largely Seventh-day Adventist community of Loma Linda, California you will find separate congregations for Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Rumanian, Spanish and

¹⁶ Ibid., 11.

¹⁷ Peter J. Paris, The Social Teaching of the Black Churches (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), xvi.

Vietnamese groups.¹⁸ There is no doubt that these cultural differences impact the role of clergy within those specific congregations.

Ethnic churches tend to relate to their clergy in more authoritarian terms and less democratic terms. Clergy tend to have more distinct authority. Lay members tend to trust the professionalism and education of their clergy to a greater degree.

In immigrant churches, the religious communities are often the center of community for the immigrant group. The pastor often functions either as a bridge to the new culture or as a link or tie to the old culture. As such, he or she is often the focal point of the inevitable struggles and conflicts that take place during the process of acculturation and assimilation.

The New Wave of Plurality

Clergy from traditions other than the Judeo-Christian tradition constitute a new wave of plurality in American religious communities. The growth of the Black Muslim movement in America¹⁹ as well as the existence of other religions such as Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism,

¹⁸ Seventh-day Adventists, Southeastern California Conference, Directory, 1994 (Riverside, Calif.: SECC, 1994), 59-60.

¹⁹ Leo Rosten, "Black Muslims," in Religions of America: Ferment and Faith in an Age of Crisis, ed. Leo Rosten (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 380-85.

and Shintoism portray an America that must come to grips with diversity.

Although religions in America tend to become American over time, they retain a distinctiveness and faithfulness to their roots and origins. Because of this distinctiveness, we find a new rising tide of clergy in America ministering to their various communities of faith. These traditions may not yet be in the mainstream of American religious thought and practice, but their impact cannot be denied.

The role of the clergy within the Muslim tradition is one of leadership expressed through preaching, teaching and decision making for the community of faith. The Arab communities as well as the Afro-American Muslim communities have developed an Americanized version of the mosque, functioning as more than a house of prayer. It has become a multi-purpose building with Sunday services emphasizing the education of children in Sunday Schools and other meetings.²⁰

The role of the priest in Buddhist and Taoist traditions centers on special occasions such as funerals and memorial days. Rather than a community of faith being the center of religious thought and action, the family is the center of

²⁰ Catherine L. Albanese, America: Religions and Religion, Wadsworth Series in Religious Studies (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 1981), 200-01.

religious thought and action.²¹ The role of the clergy seems to be distant and sacral in nature without the leadership and organizational requirements of their Judeo-Christian counterparts.

Within the Hindu tradition there are several priestly groups generally based on caste. While some of these groups are professional clergy, most have other occupations as well. As with the Buddhist and Taoist religions, most of their activity in the community has to do only with the important rites of faith and community such as weddings, funerals and other important events.²²

The organization of Shinto sects are similar to the Christian modal, focusing the community around a specific church with the priest functioning in a leadership role.²³

The existence of this diversity within American religious experience makes complete uniform codes of ethics and conduct for all clergy in America an impossibility. It is true that there are some professional ethical issues that are universal in nature. For example, no religion should tolerate the abuse of children by their professional clergy. Embezzlement, stealing, and crimes of that nature would

²¹ Joseph M. Kitagawa, Religions of the East (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 79.

²² Ibid., 131.

²³ Ibid., 307.

certainly be on that list. But to create a complete code that all religious communities could share would be fruitless.

Nonetheless, codes of ethics are a necessity. The question that needs to be answered is, "How can clergy and lay members of faith communities make sense of the expectations that they face every day?"

Conflicting Expectations

While it is impossible to create a uniform code of ethics with the pluralistic American religious milieu, there are invisible codes of ethics that function as they are expressed in the every day frustrations of clergy and their communities of faith. This code of ethics is a major force. It is invisible because it has remained unexpressed, or if expressed has a narrow scope of exposure. The plain truth is that many communities of faith have no professional code of ethics for their professional clergy and those that do have them usually leave them hidden in dust covered libraries until a moment of crisis.

Yet most clergy and lay members can articulate their expectations for the function of clergy within their community. So there exists a code for each person of each community. While they can express their expectations, most lay members and most clergy are not acquainted with their community's expression of those expectations. The problem is that these codes remain hidden. Clearly, it is the

responsibility of each religious community of faith to develop a common understanding concerning these expectations.

Who Makes the Rules?

In the development of common understanding there is the question as to which expectations receive priority. In other words, who makes the rules? Although each faith community may have a different tradition for authority within the community, one thing is clear, within American religious communities the expression of codes of ethics from an authoritarian organization, either lay based or clergy based, is woefully inadequate. It just doesn't make enough of a difference.

The Roman Catholic clergy illustrate this on two points. Although the Roman Catholic Church clearly enunciates the role of a priest within a Catechism,²⁴ since Vatican II the role has been dynamic moving away from the Tridentine image of being set apart from laity toward a communal image.²⁵ The role confusion continues in spite of the Catechism. The second issue is the issue of scandal. Nothing could be more explicit than the requirement of celibacy for Catholic priests. Yet the Catholic church continues to be under fire

²⁴ Quesnell, 29-41.

²⁵ O'Neill and Grandy, 11.

because of sex abuse by priests.²⁶

The Catholic church is by no means unique when it comes to these problems. The Southern Baptist convention²⁷ and the Presbyterian church²⁸ have looked into the same issue for their clergy.

These facts point to the need for a common understanding of professional ethics for parish clergy that reaches across the worlds of administrators, parish clergy and lay members. Lay members need to be involved in the development of codes of ethics for their parish clergy. This involvement needs to be on an extensive level that includes all lay members in the church. It is not enough to have a small committee comprised of some clergy and some lay members working in an isolated room creating a code of ethics. The inclusion of the whole community of faith is a necessity. There must be common understanding on a broad level. Lay members must be educated concerning professional ethics for parish clergy. In the process of education there are three critical factors to the method of development. They are the role of parish clergy,

²⁶ Richard W. Ostling, "Sins of the Fathers," Time, 19 Aug. 1991, 51.

²⁷ Jeff T. Seat, James T. Trent, and Jwa K. Kim, "The Prevalence and Contributing Factors of Sexual Misconduct among Southern Baptist Pastors in Six Southern States," Journal of Pastoral Care 47 (1993): 363-70.

²⁸ Neal A. Kuyper, "A Good Night's Sleep," Journal of Pastoral Care 47 (1993): 312-15.

the role of lay members and the role of society.

The Role of Parish Clergy

The role of the professional in the development of ethics for her or his specific discipline is central. There is within the profession of parish clergy an intensity connected with that role because the position is not simply one of taking on the profession, but being the professional.²⁹ The parish clergy person is not playing a role, but rather being that role. This is common to all religious communities. Therefore, that person is central to the common understanding of professional ethics within their specific religious community.

A second issue within the role of clergy is the professional responsibility that they have contracted or agreed to in accepting the position of the parish clergy professional. Some would go so far as to identify that responsibility in all professions as a covenant.

The language of privilege, trust, and promise suggests a covenantal obligation more than a contractual bargain. Professionals' knowledge and skill are not mere personal acquisitions; they are societal resources.³⁰

This responsibility should not be taken lightly. It encompasses the responsibility to be the type of professional

²⁹ Lebacqz, Professional Ethics, 63-64.

³⁰ Eric Mount, Jr., Professional Ethics in Context: Institutions, Images and Empathy (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 69-70.

and person that profession requires. It also includes knowing how to perform the functions of that profession as well as the proper relationship to those the profession serves and the unique responsibilities that entails. It deals with boundaries and communal responsibilities.

A third issue dealing with the role of the clergy in the development of a common understanding of clergy ethics is the public persona of parish clergy and responsibility to society.

A professional exemplifies a concern for society as a whole. True professionals care for the best in a culture: they concern themselves with values and efforts to attain excellence.³¹

As society increases its scrutiny of parish clergy, parish clergy bear the responsibility of answering the questions society raises. Parish clergy are no longer simply accountable to their faith communities, but they are also responsible to those outside of those faith communities.

The Role of the Lay Members

Lay members are the other half of the professional covenant parish clergy enter. Yet in spite of the centrality of the role of parish clergy, the role of lay members should by no means be a passive role. In most cases it is not. Lay members receive the services of the parish clergy professional as well as support the faith community for which the clergy person has responsibility. This places in their

³¹ Dennis Campbell, 97.

hands a tremendous power to indirectly control the clergy person and enforce their expectations on the her or him.

In receiving the services of the clergy professional, lay members exercise trust in that professional to serve in a way that meets their expectation of the covenant entered. This is problematic in that the expectations of the lay member and that of the clergy do not always agree. The responsibility of the lay member is to dialogue with their clergy professional and be willing to negotiate a common understanding of those expectations.

Likewise, the lay member exercises power in their support of the faith community. If the clergy professional does not have the support of lay members within the community of faith, they cannot function as a clergy professional. The responsibility of the lay member again is to dialogue and negotiate.

The Role of Society

It is obvious that an increasingly secular society has not lost its interest in the institutions of religion. If anything, the attention expended on clergy in the past decade seems to indicate an intensification in society's regard concerning parish clergy. This is manifested by the attention media has showered on clergy scandal and the new lack of reticence of the courts to get involved in clergy

matters.³²

Parish Clergy and the Law

The involvement of the state in the function of religion through the court system and laws of the state has always been prohibited by the first amendment.³³ Nonetheless, there are growing efforts by the courts to be involved in the professional actions of parish clergy through the prosecution of criminal action and the suing for clergy malpractice.

This is illustrated by the willingness of the courts to allow lawsuits such as the \$50 million lawsuit against televangelist Robert G. Tilton,³⁴ and the criminal conviction of televangelist Jim Bakker.³⁵ It seems that the courts are less hesitant to involve themselves in the clergy professions than they have been in the past. The definition of law is as follows:

That which must be obeyed and followed by citizens subject to sanctions or legal consequences is a law. Law is a solemn expression of the will of the supreme

³² Thomas E. Denham and Melinda L. Denham, "Avoiding Malpractice Suits in Pastoral Counseling," Pastoral Psychology 35 (1986): 83.

³³ Patrick Garry, "Churches and the Courts: The First Amendment Protection from Clergy Lawsuits," Journal of Law and Religion 9, no. 1 (1991): 180.

³⁴ John W. Kennedy, "End of the Line for Tilton?" Christianity Today, 11 Jan. 1993, 78, 82.

³⁵ "Jim Bakker Freed from Jail, To Stay in a Halfway House," New York Times, 2 July 1994, I6.

power of the State.³⁶

As such it is the tool of society, and little by little we see it being used by society to enforce society's expectations of professionalism on professionals and institutions.

The development of the idea of the clergy professional has given rise to a new form of tort actions known as clergy malpractice. If parish clergy are accepted as professionals, then there must be some minimum standard of competency for that profession. The law defines that through tort action.

Malpractice is a tort (i.e., a personal injury) action alleging a specialized form of negligence. The focus of malpractice and negligence claims is whether the defendant's conduct was extraordinarily careless, whether the defendant's actions presented an unreasonable risk to others to the extent that the defendant should have known to act more carefully in order to avoid injuring the plaintiff.³⁷

In other words, what level of professional knowledge and skill do lay members have a right to expect from parish clergy to protect them from harm?

The watershed case in this matter is Grace Community Church v. Nally. Kenneth Nally, who was twenty-four years old, was a troubled young man with a history of problems. After receiving counseling from staff of the Grace Community

³⁶ Henry Campbell Black, "Law," in Black's Law Dictionary 6th ed. (St. Paul: West, 1990), 884.

³⁷ Thomas F. Taylor, "Clergy Malpractice," Christian Ministry, Nov.-Dec. 1992, 16.

Church in Garden Grove, California, he subsequently took his own life. His family sued the church for "wrongful death based on the theory of clergy negligence in spiritual counseling."³⁸

The trial court granted non-suit reasoning that Nally sought the counseling of his own free will and the state has no business interfering with church practice. The appeals court reversed the decision of the trial court ruling that even non-licensed therapists have a duty to refer clients who need medical help and this duty did not breach the free exercise of religion right because the state has a compelling interest in the lives of its citizens. The California Supreme Court affirmed the trial court on tort grounds. What remains unanswered is the constitutional issue involved in malpractice defense.³⁹

In ecclesiastical matters clergy have traditionally been completely protected by first amendment rights, the problem has developed as clergy have functioned in roles that are the domain of secular professions such as counselors. It is at that point they become liable under that other professions

³⁸ Robert Prevost, "Clergy Malpractice after Oregon v. Smith," Journal of Church and State 34, (Spring 1992): 282-84.

³⁹ Ibid., 282-84.

standards and expectations.⁴⁰

Another watershed case is Oregon v. Smith which affirmed the exemption of religious belief and practice from regulation by the state. "Therefore, if clergy counseling can be shown to be more like belief than conduct, such counseling may be protected from regulation."⁴¹ What this clearly shows is the need for parish clergy and their faith communities to define the scope and nature of the counseling that takes place within the parish setting.

As stated before, clergy are protected under the first amendment rights for the free exercise of religion. Because clergy have not developed professional standards of professional ethics, society is slowly moving to fill that void. Through the pressure of media and the coercion of the courts they have begun to enforce a standard of their own, which at the very least identifies what is considered to be unacceptable and at the most is beginning to identify minimum levels of competency for parish clergy.

Clergy have in the past enjoyed special privileges in terms of confidentiality but recent thought has put limits on

⁴⁰ Garry, 179-80.

⁴¹ Prevost, 296-97.

these privileges.⁴²

If parish clergy want to maintain a their current level of religious freedom and clergy privilege, they must take responsibility for clearly defining the expectations for their profession that are reasonable. They also must find a way to involve lay members in the process of developing those expectations, and having a broad base of understanding within their specific parish. Failure to be proactive in this issue will invite further involvement by media and the courts to define the profession in their way. This will cut out the roles of the most important people involved, the parish clergy and the lay member.

⁴² William W. Rankin, Confidentiality and Clergy: Churches, Ethics and the Law (Harrisburg, Pa.: Morehouse, 1990), 68-76.

CHAPTER 4

The Lay Member's Involvement in Ethical Reflection

Lay members have a right to know about their clergy person's professional code of ethics. Most authors who write about professional ethics for parish clergy write only to clergy. The underlying assumption is that lay members are not involved in the process of understanding and working with professional codes of ethics for parish clergy. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Lay members are involved in professional ethics for parish clergy in that they generally have definite expectations concerning their clergy. These expectations form an unwritten code of professional ethics. This unwritten and hidden code of ethics is just as valid as any code of ethics written down, and in fact can at times be more valid. The reason for their validity is that these are the codes that tend to be enforced on the local level in interaction between lay members and their clergy. Lay members are involved in the issue of clergy ethics, the question that must be asked is, "How effective is that involvement in furthering the mission and ministry of their particular community of faith?"

Lay members, with the exception of a very few of those in leadership positions, rarely play a role in the intentional development of codes of ethics for parish clergy. This often results in naive, unrealistic and fruitless

expectations. Even if the expectations have value, they tend to remain unexpressed. Therefore, lay members involvement in clergy ethics has generally been ineffective in furthering the mission and ministry of their particular community of faith.

The intentional development of a common understanding of professional ethics for parish clergy would enhance the ministry of the clergyperson as well as clearly provide lay members with realistic expectations. Furthermore, it would protect the community of faith from unscrupulous clergy and protect members from clergy who overstep the boundaries that provide safety within the lay/clergy relationship. These results would advance the mission and ministry of communities of faith.

There are two basic issues involved in professional ethics. The first has to do with the special knowledge of the professional which sets her or him apart. The second has to do with expectations of personal behavior. Wiest and Smith put it this way:

The professional lives in a balance between two sensibilities. One is the confidence that arises from thorough education, sound theoretical understanding, and experience of successful application of knowledge through technical skill. The other is an awareness of personal limitations that prevents errors in judgment that would harm patients, clients, or counselees.¹

The term professional implies qualifications and

¹ Wiest and Smith, 71.

training to serve in a special way that sets them apart from the non-professional in that field. Although some argue that clergy do not or should not fit into the category of professional, the evolution of ecclesiology in America has produced the parish clergy professional. The profession of parish clergy ought to have standards of competency that match the expectations of lay members. Paul Camenisch was right when he argued that

The professional ethics model is useful and appropriate for the clergy as far as it goes. Seen positively as the standards that guide professionals in their relations to clients and the larger society in light of the special skills and knowledge they claim to have, the distinctive goal they pursue in their professional activity, and the atypical moral commitment they aspire to, professional ethics sets a floor below which the clergy ought not fall.²

Standards in education and training should be maintained within the profession.

The second issue deals with the personal behavior of the professional. This has to do with the moral conduct. As Joe Trull and James Carter point out, this area of professional ethics deals with moral decision making.³

There is a third issue that has recently gained prominence. This issue is the use and misuse of power by

² Paul F. Camenisch, "Clergy Ethics and the Professional Ethics Model," in Clergy Ethics in a Changing Society: Mapping the Terrain, eds. James P. Wind et al. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991).

³ Trull and Carter, 43.

professionals within the professional client relationship. Marilyn Peterson recognizes a power differential within that relationship.

The space between professionals' authority and clients' vulnerability creates a fundamental inequality in terms of who has the advantage in the relationship and the factors that diminish the client's ability to be self-determining.⁴

This power differential creates the opportunity for abuse within the relationship. Boundaries within the professional client relationship guard against the misuse of power and protect the vulnerabilities of both the professional and client.

Boundaries are the limits that allow for a safe connection based on the client's needs. When these limits are altered, what is allowed in the relationship becomes ambiguous. Such ambiguity is often experienced as an intrusion into the sphere of safety.⁵

Professional ethics for parish clergy includes defining a common understanding of the boundaries that exist within the clergy/lay member relationship.

This chapter will deal with these three issues: professional competence, the issue of power, and the issue of morality in personal behavior.

Professional Competence

The parish clergy professional is faced with a wide

⁴ Marilyn R. Peterson, At Personal Risk: Boundary Violations in Professional-Client Relationships (New York: Norton, 1992), 43.

⁵ Ibid., 74.

variety of duties their position requires them to perform. They are leaders in the worship of the community and often function as both the organizing element of that worship as well as the public representative of the experience. The task of preaching is most often left to the clergy professional. The art of teaching, both in small groups and larger groups, is a central task that requires special knowledge and ability. Leadership skills are a part of the role that professional clergy play, carrying much of the burden for vision and authority in their specific religious community. They also must have specific management skills appropriate to managing an all volunteer organization. These management skills must include being able to chair committees, inspire commitment, and successful delegation. And lastly, parish clergy must be able to perform ministry of a personal nature such as visitation, counseling, and spiritual guidance.

There is truth to the assertion that the personhood of clergy is more important than the tasks of ministry, yet they cannot be separated. Wiest and Smith describe "a complete union of training, ethic, and personhood."⁶ This is certainly the ideal. To maintain this union of professionalism requires a commitment to competence.

This may sound strange. Why not a commitment to excellence? Why just a commitment to competence? A

⁶ Wiest and Smith, 183.

commitment to competence in no way lowers the standards of excellence desired as the ideal by clergy, lay members and administrators. Every professional should strive for the highest level of excellence in their field. What is needed in the professional life of parish clergy is a mastery of all the skills necessary to fulfill their role. Technical competence is the method by which the tasks of ministry accomplished. They are the means by which ministry is provided and compassion dispensed.⁷ It is crucial to the success of the ministry of parish clergy.

Who Makes the Rules

The question of who is responsible for our understanding of competency is an interesting one. While in the past professional codes of ethics were often written by one person, virtually all are now written by committee.⁸ In church settings this may be implemented on any level the local parish is connected to. Administrative organizations often create codes of ethics for their clergy.⁹ Seminaries are often involved in their development.¹⁰ The effectiveness of the implementation of these codes is severely questioned.

⁷ Ibid., 185.

⁸ Ibid., 62.

⁹ Trull, 220-42.

¹⁰ Ibid., 10.

Often they are replete with platitudes and have very little substance.¹¹ Another critique is that when the authority of a large organization stands behind a code, "the protection of the good name of the organization often becomes a chief concern of the code."¹² The real purpose of the professional code of ethics should be furtherance of the ministry of the local parish.

The rules, or professional code of ethics, should be developed where they are going to be used by the people who are going to be impacted by their implementation. This means they should be negotiated by the parish clergy and her or his local parish.

This will allow for the diversity that exists from congregation to congregation and enable the lay members and parish clergy to decide which skills have priority. It will also have the added benefit of educating lay members about the professional life of the pastor. Because many lay members only see their clergy on weekends, they wonder what clergy do the rest of the time. Most importantly, it will inform the clergy person of the tasks that render ministry to her or his parishioners.

This process will not be easy. There will be conflict in the development and negotiation of these codes of ethics.

¹¹ Wiest and Smith, 69.

¹² Ibid, 96.

There will never be full agreement and there will be times when consensus cannot be reached. This will at times be between divergent views among parishioners and at other times between parishioners and clergy. This conflict can produce growth in both the professional life of the parish clergyperson and the faith experience of the community of faith. Progress is always accompanied by struggle.

The Role of Parish Clergy

In the negotiation of a common understanding of professional ethics between lay members and parish clergy, the clergy stand at both an advantage and disadvantage. They have an advantage in that as the professional they carry both expert knowledge and societal ascription of authority.¹³ Their disadvantage is that they are negotiating with many other points of view. There may be as many sets of expectations concerning their role as there are church members.

Parish clergy need to guard the realism of the process recognizing that their humanity will prevent them from fulfilling all expectations. They also need to take the responsibility to continually develop those skills that are high priority. A third responsibility of parish clergy is contextualize their competency to the specific culture within which they serve.

¹³ Peterson, 36-37.

The Role of the Lay Members

All lay members ought to be aware of what is required of parish clergy. They need to know how parish clergy can serve their needs, and what is unreasonable to expect from their clergy. There is today an increasing overlap between certain professions. This has caused a blurring of the roles and expectations that lay people have from one profession to the next. They may expect the same service from clergy as they do from a counselor, a teacher or other people oriented profession. Lay members need to clearly define in their minds what they have a right to expect from their clergy in regards to their competency.

Lay member ought to take the responsibility of providing the resources to help train their clergy in the tasks they request. A common complaint about seminaries is that they poorly train clergy candidates for the tasks they will be performing.¹⁴ Lay members should encourage their clergy to continue their education in ministry and related fields and then should provide them with the time and resources to do it.

The Role of Society

Local parishes have responsibility not only to their own parishioners, but also to their local communities. The role of the clergy is pivotal in providing the basis for its

¹⁴ Farley, Theologia, 3.

involvement. William May rightly points this out.

The church--along with other voluntary communities, such as synagogues, political parties, parent-teacher organizations, citizens' projects, and cause-oriented movements--constitutes a distinctive social resource on the American scene.¹⁵

Society, as expressed in local communities, ought to be made aware of what roles within the community can be filled by parish clergy. They need to see the unique training and abilities of parish clergy as a resource that they can access.

The unfortunate reality of the rising distrust of professions and professionals¹⁶ has created a barrier to clergy involvement in the community. Society has no right based on involvement or responsibility to be aware of competency standards for parish clergy. But, making local communities aware of the expertise of parish clergy would certainly enhance the ability of the clergy to serve those communities. Clergy have a civic responsibility of leadership within their communities.¹⁷ This is a key element in the role of parish clergy.

¹⁵ William F. May, "Images that Shape the Public Obligations of the Minister," in Clergy Ethics in a Changing Society: Mapping the Terrain, ed. James P. Wind, et. al (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 55.

¹⁶ Sullivan, 193.

¹⁷ Harmon, 51.

Playing with Power

Inherent to the very nature of professionalism is authority and power. A professional is one who enters "a company of practitioners who have a commonly agreed upon threshold of education and training."¹⁸ This education and training creates the role of the professional and gives the professional credentials to practice their profession. With these credentials comes authority. The exercise of authority necessitates the use of power.

Karen Lebacqz points out that in ministry settings there occurs an imposed intimacy between the professional and the client.¹⁹ This means that the exercise of power within that relationship can effect the most personal aspects of personhood in both the lay member and the parish clergy person.

In the case of the clergy professional this exercise of power is intensified in that it is connected with the religious beliefs of the lay member. In many cases, lay members see clergy as speaking for God.²⁰ This perception coupled with human failings provide several categories of experiences by which lay members are vulnerable to injury.

¹⁸ Noyce, 200.

¹⁹ Lebacqz, 111.

²⁰ Ibid., 115.

The first area is a when an professional exercises power within a setting where they do not have expertise. Clergy setting themselves up as professional counselors without the proper training probably represent the largest group of this category. This abuse also takes place in minor issues, such as advise giving. The minister, representing God's voice, is often consulted concerning financial matters, medical matters, legal matters and all sorts of other issues outside of her or his training and expertise. The temptation to share knowledge is often overwhelming. The clergy person has a right to share personal knowledge as any other person, yet they must take into account that what they say often carries weight beyond the scope of their expertise because of there professional position. It is important to create boundaries defining areas of expertise.

Another area of vulnerability for the lay member is the practice of ministry by an incompetent clergy person. Because ministry involves intimacy, there are certain rights lay members have a right to expect.

The third and final area of vulnerability is the violation of trust by the professional. When the professional utilizes the power of the clergy/lay member relationship to benefit her or his own being rather than the good of the lay member they have crossed the boundary of professional/client relationships. It is curious that role

reversal is a characteristic of boundary violations.²¹ It is the perceived powerlessness of the professional that draws the vulnerable client across the boundary and into the relationship.

For the lay member the consequences of the exercise of power by the clergy professional can be profound. It can effect decisions that transform lives. Clergy influence the most basic human decisions.

Who Makes the Rules

Because the power of the professional is institutionalized and legitimated,²² they bear the burden of initiative in creating the boundaries that safeguard clients. This is also the case in the lay/clergy relationship. Although clergy bear the burden of initiative, the development of boundaries must be a shared task to which the lay member also has responsibility.

The existence of a set of rules, code of ethics, is no guarantee against the abuse of power with the professional client relationship. The depth of exploitation that professionals can fall to is illustrated by professionals who cooperated with Hitler in the name of the pursuit of

²¹ Peterson, 77.

²² Lebacqz, 113.

knowledge.²³ The issue is more complex than that and requires a process. Peterson notes that "since codes are external to the process of the relationship, however, their protective ability is limited."²⁴ For codes to be effective they must be part of the process of the relationship.

Personal investment is the first requirement of commitment. If parish clergy and lay members are to be committed to boundaries that protect their relationship they must go through a process together of creating a common understanding of those boundaries. While it is true that no set of rules can cover every possibility of boundary violation within the professional/client relationship, within the lay/clergy relationship there are certain boundary violations that are most common.

The Role of Parish Clergy

The vulnerability of clients presents a responsibility to professionals to be proactive in the development of boundaries. They must take the initiative. Clients depend on them to exercise that initiative in this area.

As clients we are vulnerable because of needs that we cannot take care of ourselves. Professionals, because of their training and expertise, are better equipped to

²³ Darrell Reeck, Ethics for the Professions: A Christian Perspective (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 24-27.

²⁴ Peterson, 47.

meet these needs.²⁵

They are also better equipped to understand the necessity and role of boundaries.

Clergy also are vulnerable in this relationship. Allegations of boundary violations can ruin careers.²⁶ Well defined and well publicized boundaries can protect the trust relationship that is at the heart of lay/clergy relationship.

The Role of the Lay Members

Together with parish clergy the lay member bears the responsibility of developing a common understanding of boundaries. They must understand this a requisite to any personal and intimate ministry.

In a related issue, lay members must take the responsibility for the protection of the most vulnerable members of the faith community. They must act as overseers of the lay/clergy relationship, enforcing boundaries for the helpless. The two most vulnerable categories are children and the mentally handicapped. An increasing awareness of the sex abuse of minors has forced administrative organizations to try to cope with it. Their ineffectiveness has prompted the courts to step in and hold them accountable for their

²⁵ Peterson, 34.

²⁶ See, for example, "An Anonymous Letter from a Victim of ELCA Policies on Sexual Misconduct Allegations," Lutheran Forum 27 (Aug. 1993): 8-9.

failure to report and take action.²⁷ The only effective method of dealing with this problem is lay members enforcing proper boundaries between clergy and children.

The Laymember's Rights

The laymember is central to the function of the parish clergy professional and are therefore necessary participants in the development of an understanding of the profession. They are part of the defining reality of what it means to be a parish clergy professional and they have the right to be part of that defining reality.

As the party receiving the service of the parish clergy person and as the members supporting the faith community within which he or she serves, lay members have the right and responsibility negotiate the basic elements that make up that relationship. Clergy should not assume that the power of their profession allows them, absent from lay involvement, to define the reality for their profession. To do so is arrogant and foolhardy.

The wise alternative is to make partners of lay members, developing a common understanding of professional ethics for parish clergy that serves the needs of the faith community they share.

²⁷ Donald C. Clark, Jr., "Sexual Abuse in the Church: The Law Steps In," Christian Century, 14 Apr. 1993, 396-98.

Chapter 5

Reaching Mutual Understanding

Professional ethics for parish clergy provide the structure for the relationship between lay members and parish clergy. In response to the rising dissatisfaction within religious communities concerning the problems of the parish clergy professional, many religious institutions have begun a process of educating clergy regarding their professional responsibilities. The effectiveness of this involvement on the institutional level "at the local level is spotty at best."¹ It also has the drawback of only addressing prominent problems such as sex abuse of minors and sexual misconduct.

In the last decade at least seven major denominations have responded by revising their clergy misconduct policies.² As well, Pope John Paul II voiced his awareness of the seriousness of sex abuse by Roman Catholic clergy and has created a joint panel of Vatican and U.S. experts to develop policies for handling offenders.³

Most denominations have in place codes of ethics, ministerial handbooks or other forms of written direction for

¹ Thomas S. Giles, "Coping with Sexual Misconduct in the Church," Christianity Today, 11 Jan. 1993, 48.

² Giles, 48.

³ "Responding to Priest Sex Abuse," Christian Century, 7 July 1993, 667.

the clergy professional.

Conspicuously absent is any example of including lay members in dealing with the issue and inviting their participation in finding solutions to the problems. Part of the myth of professional power is that this problem belongs to professionals and their administrators. It does not. It is shared between professional clergy, lay members and the religious communities within which they serve.

Codes of ethics will be most effective not in completed form sitting on a shelf gathering dust, but in dynamic form as lay members and clergy continue to dialogue concerning the relationship that exists between them.

This chapter proposes a process to reach mutual understanding between lay members and parish clergy concerning professional ethics. This process is part of the educational ministry of the religious community. The first section will offer a philosophy of education as sharing together, in contrast to the dissemination of knowledge in a patronizing manner. This is important in that this whole process is to give a voice to lay members in this issue.

The second section will explore the ethical concerns that should be addressed in this process of education, outlining the areas of ministry that are impacted by this discussion.

The third section will propose various models of teaching and how they can be utilized in this educational

process while the fourth section proposes a model for the process in integration in the educational life of religious communities.

Including Lay Members

The educational process of including lay members concerning the issue of professional ethics for parish clergy ought to be empowering to the lay members. It should not embody the typical understanding of pedagogy that implies and imbalance of power an proportion.⁴ Rather, the relationship between clergy and lay members in the development of their common understanding should be one of cooperation and equity as each bring their unique perspectives and skills to the table of learning to share together. Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore describes pedagogy as "an act of walking with, sharing with, acting with, remembering with, and constructing meaning with people in a learning community."⁵

The task of education is important, and it should be noted that the task is a task for the religious community, not something to be performed by just the professional clergy. The clergy as teacher in this role find their role a responsive one. They do not seek control. As Sara Little

⁴ Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, "Teaching: Meeting People at Intersections of Meaning," paper delivered at the Faculty Retreat, School of Theology at Claremont, Calif., 30 Aug. 1994, 1.

⁵ Ibid, 3.

points out,

[T]eaching in and by the church is a form of ministry intentionally directed toward helping persons seek and respond to truth. Ministry is a form of service, a person's response of gratitude to God's gracious action and being. Therefore teaching is always done as a responsive activity, it is never a matter of seeking control.⁶

The role of both the clergy and the lay member ought to be a cooperative and supportive role, utilizing the educational process to find a commonality of experience that will enhance their relationship. They are together and apart in this experience. Together in the sense that their interaction is inevitable and effectual. Apart in the sense that they look upon this common experience from different perspectives and may see it in totally different ways. Education, in its most effect sense, allows both parties to find the togetherness of their experience.

Ethical Concerns Addressed

There are three areas of ethical concerns that need to be addressed in the educational process of developing a shared understanding of professional ethics for parish clergy. This section will consider them. The first is the actual personhood of the clergy. This deals with the actualization of the clergy person as a person. We will explore the authenticity, integrity, empathy, virtue, and creativity that is required of the person in the role of

⁶ Sara Little, To Set One's Heart: Belief and Teaching in the Church (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 4.

professional clergy.

The second section will deal with the boundaries that provide for a safe and production relationship between lay members and clergy. This will explore the experience in counseling, dealing with children, and responsibilities of a financial nature. These are simply meant to be illustrative of the various boundaries that ought to be created within the lay clergy relationship.

The third section will deal with areas of competency in clergy skills. Clergy skills are those skills that are common to most religious communities and should be discussed in the discussion of clergy ethics. They include worship, teaching, management, personal ministry, and leadership. This is certainly not a comprehensive list, but simply those skills the author has discovered to be necessary within the context of ministry. Part of the task of each community will be to develop their own list of skills.

Actual Personhood

Actual personhood refers to the ethical issues of virtue rather than ethical issues of principle. The question here is less of what should a clergy person do and more what should a clergy person be. This covers her or his authenticity, integrity, empathy, and virtue.

Authenticity refers to the authentic nature of the experience of the clergy person. In other words, is that person real. Do they have a real experience within the

religious community they are committed to? What type of actions authenticate their experience and role? An example of how this might play out in a church setting would be a discussion of what it means to be an authentic Methodist minister in a local community. A discussion of how that would be the same and how that would be different from being an authentic church member would sharpen the focus of the issue. The clergy person must be seen as authentic to the community he or she serves. They must also be seen as human to be authentic. Humanity with its brokenness, demands grace within the context of communities of grace. The fulcrum of the discussion is the balance between the humanity and authenticity of the clergy person. What does it take to be real, and what extremes mitigate against authenticity?

Integrity refers to the trustworthiness of the clergy person. There are two aspects to this issue. The first is honesty. The priority that honesty plays in the life of the community determines the interplay between the participants in that community. Within the context of professional ethics, trust is the vital link between lay members and parish clergy. That trust depends on the honesty displayed within that relationship. The other aspect of integrity deals with the openness of the clergy person. This issue is more complicated than the first. Openness is important in terms of raising the comfort level of people that you work with. They must feel like their leader is predictable and

understandable. Yet within the world of clergy, confidentiality is a key component of trust as well. If the clergy person is the fount of all information and chief gossip for the community, her or his credibility is ruined. The judicious use of knowledge is an important art. Maintaining openness and confidentiality is a like walking a tightrope.

The third issue is that of empathy. The author's definition of empathy is the living with aspect of ministry, that is being able to relate to the experience of the parishioners. Some communities desire a clergy person who is like them in just about every way and can relate to their every experience. Other communities want a clergy person who presents a model of the spiritual ideal that they can strive to reach. Clergy should have a sense from their community of what ways the community desires their empathy and what ways the community desire their separateness. An example of this would be celibacy in the Catholic church and marriage in the Seventh-day Adventist church. The Catholic church demands celibacy of their parish clergy, while Seventh-day Adventist administrators strongly encourage marriage on the part of their clergy. There are many areas that empathy is desired and many it is not, and these demands will differ in reality and intensity from community to community.

Virtues are the good intentions of the clergy. Each community has a vague sense of what goodness consists of for

their clergy. Sometimes it is rigid and easily enforced, other times it is flexible or unenforceable. A discussion of the virtues that are expected can be helpful in clearing the air between clergy and lay members.

Boundaries

Boundaries are the policies that guard against abuse of the professional/lay member relationship. There are three areas that are particularly pertinent in today's world. The first is the area of counseling and includes the guarding against abuse, against transference, maintaining confidentiality, and practicing only that for which the clergy person is trained. The second area is the area of interaction with children, guarding against abuse and providing a human image of religious intensity. The third area is the area of fiscal management and responsibility.

The counseling relationship between the clergy and their lay members needs to be clearly defined to guard against abuse. A huge danger to the clergy and the lay members is the issue of transference, and unfortunately most clergy are not trained to deal with it. Most sexual indiscretions happen within the counseling relationship while not successfully handling the issue of transference. Well publicized policies that are rigorously followed can do much to prevent the possibility of situations that end awkwardly for all parties involved. A specific location for counseling, random observations which interrupt the sessions

by a third party, or third party involvement in the counseling session can all contribute to a policy that puts the clergy person above suspicion and removes much of the possibility of indiscretion. Another issue in counseling is the expectations of confidentiality. These need to be clearly defined before the counseling sessions begin. And lastly, the religious community needs to be actively supportive in providing the training they expect from their clergy in their counseling. Conversely, the clergy need to be conspicuously fastidious about only performing counseling for which they have been specifically trained.

The role of the clergy in the fiscal management of the religious community contains ethical concerns as well. Again, there should be policies in place that protect the process by which financial decisions are made and carried out. An example of how this is played out on a small scale would be the simple task of counting the offering and depositing it in the bank. If that is considered the clergy's responsibility, policies to safe guard the reputation of the clergy and assets of the church should be in place. He or she should never count the money alone. The money should be signed for and accounted for by others as well as the clergy person. Their actions should be demonstratively above reproach.

Competency

Competency deals with five major areas of clergy

responsibility within the religious community in which they serve. This is not meant to be comprehensive, but illustrative, recognizing that each religious community is unique in the tasks and duties they require of their clergy. The five areas are as follows: worship, teaching, management, personal ministry, and leadership.

Worship has two aspects of involvement. The first for many communities is preaching. Although the art of preaching does very little to inform the clergy person about their congregation, it definitely reveals the clergy person to their congregation. Discussion of the type of preaching, style of preaching, and preparation required for competent preaching is important. The other aspect of worship is the actual planning of the worship service itself. Each community has distinctive traditions concerning the involvement of lay members and parish clergy in the planning of worship. These traditions should be respected or dealt with in an open forum. Worship is the one thing all religious communities do together. Each local religious community needs to dialogue concerning what skills are desired and necessary for their clergy in worship.

The role of the clergy in the teaching ministry of the church is critical in two ways. First, as a teacher, what special training and or skills are necessary for the clergy professional to have? What knowledge of methods and modal is necessary for effective ministry? The second issue to be

dealt with is; what knowledge should clergy have? This will be distinct from community to community.

Another area of importance is management. How much of the management of the community is the clergy responsible for, and what types of management skills are necessary to manage the resources (human and material) of the community. The question of the who chairs committees, who delegates and who follows up needs to be settled in a manner that empowers both lay members and clergy to be faithful to their tradition as well as function at what they do best. The utilization of resources is a critical question for any community with a mission.

Personal ministry is the direction clergy responsibility is going more and more. Lay members are looking to clergy for the human touch of their religious experience and asking for visitation, both in times of crisis (hospital, death in the family, etc), and in the home. They also are coming to their pastor first for many of their counseling needs. Religious communities should define the priority counseling should have in their clergy's professional life and level of competence they expect.

Leadership is the last area of professional competency we will look at in this section. The question should be asked, "What are we looking for in a clergy person? Are we looking for someone who fits into the vision of the religious community and submits to the authority of the community, or

are we looking for a leader with vision who will form the vision for the community and wield authority in the exercise of the vision?" These describe two extremes, and reality will probably always lie somewhere in the middle. Yet this is a valid topic for discussion between lay members and parish clergy.

Places and Methods of Education

The role of the clergy in the education of lay members could very well be described as facilitator.⁷ They are the persons who assist the learners to learn in many different ways. The choices of places of learning within religious communities are diverse. They include worship services, the educational component of the church, town hall meetings, leadership meetings such as boards or steering committees, and one on one encounters with the clergy person.

Worship is an ideal educational setting in that it is one place that has broad attendance of the members of the community. Although it is often eschewed as a learning experience, there can be no doubt that the traditions observed, the symbolism employed, the rich varieties of deep religious experience all are instructive in the inmost sense of understanding. Careful analysis of each act in the worship service shows not only a glimpse of the communities desire for relationship with God, but also betrays their

⁷ R. E. Y. Wickett, Models of Adult Religious Education Practice (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1991), 40.

actualities of relationship to their clergy. The simple act of deciding to put a table with an open Bible on it either in front of the preacher or behind the preacher can have significant symbolic ramifications concerning the communities' views on the role of the Bible and human personality in preaching. Learning in worship happens through the symbols used, and words spoken both by the congregation and the speaker of the day. Some see the sermon as the major teaching event of today.⁸ This is the case only when the sermon is the central component in a full program of education. Available to the speaker is a recently rediscovered method of instruction call narrative. Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore notes that, "In recent years an awakening to the power and multivalence of story has stirred considerable interest in storytelling, story sermons, narrative theology, and literary approaches to ethics and values."⁹

The Christian education component of church function can provide a different size of group for learning experiences as well as experiences aimed specifically at different age groups and interest groups. Different methods are available

⁸ Clark M. Williamson and Ronald J. Allen, The Teaching Minister (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 83-104.

⁹ Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, Teaching From the Heart: Theology and Educational Method (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 136.

with the small group that are not available with the larger group. For instance, group investigation utilizing the three concepts of inquiry, knowledge, and the dynamics of the learning group to explore an issue.¹⁰ Also available in the small group setting is role playing and simulation games.¹¹

Town hall type meetings are the least effective learning environment of those discussed in this project. Yet they can be used to negotiate and formulate those areas of ethical concerns for parish clergy that need to be formalized. Lecture and limited interaction is helpful to provide information from outside sources and expression of information describing the community. It can truly be a learning experience for those in the community to visualize the diversity of thought in the community as well as the areas of uniformity. What the town hall meeting lacks is the ability to truly change those participants present. Although it allows for expression of opinion, the experience rarely is geared for change. One way to change that is to alter the tasks of those present. Break out in to small groups to work on problems and then bring reports back to the groups as a whole. In the dynamics of the small groups things can change.

¹⁰ Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil, Models of Teaching, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 232-40.

¹¹ Ibid., 241-59 and 295-323.

The most important place of learning within religious communities takes place in the one on one interaction between lay members and their parish clergy. This is often serendipitous but can be carefully and intentionally planned. An example of when this would be appropriate would be the beginning of a counseling relationship. At that time it would be appropriate to negotiate the boundaries, nature of, and expectations concerning the relationship.

A Model of Education

Implementing an educational program including lay members in the process of dealing with the issue of professional ethics for parish clergy should have six steps. The first is the proposal of the program to those lay members in authority in the religious community. That would be the church board, steering committee, or executive committee. The second would be the use of neutral outside help to facilitate some of the discussion. The third is the development of focus groups to prioritize the ethical issues of greatest concern. The fourth is introduction and implementation of the program to the church. The fifth is follow up in Christian education, small groups, meetings, children's programs. And the sixth is evaluation of the program.

This six step process has the goal of leading a religious community on a journey of theological and ethical reflection concerning their core values as a community. This

reflection is a critical part of the development of a local faith community. The sharing and struggling together over issues of ministry can provide growth and strength. The formation of mutual understandings can draw together and fortify the relationship between lay members and clergy.

Lastly, in the process of developing a shared understanding, the search within religious communities should be a theological journey. The principles that are utilized ought to be theological principles, based on the authority of scripture. Although the application of those principles must be contextualized to the specific context of that particular unique faith community, the values and faith upon which those principles are founded should not change. This process is part of the basic process of each religious community expressing their core convictions. It shapes the way we think and is part of our faith journey.

Any process like this is bound to have conflictual edges. There will be spaces and areas of disagreement. There will also be places where compromise is not possible. The struggle of faith communities to find their comfort level of diversity and unity can be an opportunity for growth. Growth never comes without struggle.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Religious communities need to develop a shared understanding between their professional clergy and lay members concerning professional ethics for parish clergy. Local religious communities need to take the initiative in approaching the problem and dealing with it. A comprehensive approach is impossible. The approach must be tailored to the specific community by that community and in the tailoring of that approach they will learn about the needs of that community and how the working relationship between the clergy professional and the lay member fills those needs or doesn't fill those needs.

Issues for Further Study

This project only touches on the unique relationship that exists between a church and the society that surrounds it. The impact of society on the relationship between clergy and lay members would be an interesting and fruitful endeavor. There are three areas of impact that should be studied; media, law, and secularism.

Another area for further study is a special understanding of the inclusion of children in the education of lay members concerning professional ethics for parish clergy. Children are the most vulnerable participants in the lay/clergy relationship. Rooting out sex abusers is only half the battle. Methods of educating children in such a way

as to provide them with defenses against such abuse is the other half of the battle.

Conclusion

The lay/clergy relationship is one of trust. As clergy professionals ask for trust from lay members, clergy professionals need to trust lay members to the point of allowing them to become involved in the sensitive issues of professional ethics.

Parish clergy need to be convinced that it is in the best interest of the mission of their faith communities to educate lay members concerning their professional ethics.

This will benefit their ministry, the spiritual lives of lay members and the community.

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